

PUBLIC HEARING

DELAWARE COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

**A LOCAL LAW OF THE COUNTY OF DELAWARE, NEW YORK, KNOWN AS THE
“FALSE ALARM REDUCTION ACT”**

AUGUST 24, 2022

The Delaware County Board of Supervisors held a Public Hearing regarding Local Law Intro. No. 15 of 2022 in the Board of Supervisors’ Room of the Senator Charles D. Cook County Office Building, 111 Main Street, Delhi, New York at 1:03 p.m. on Wednesday, August 24, 2022, Chairman Tina B. Molé presiding.

Chairman Molé called the hearing to order and read the Notice of Hearing:

NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING

**LOCAL LAW INTRO. NO. 15 OF 2022
FALSE ALARM REDUCTION ACT**

PLEASE TAKE NOTICE that the Delaware County Board of Supervisors will hold a Public Hearing on Wednesday, August 24, 2022 at 1:05 p.m. in the Board of Supervisors’ Room of the County Office Building, 111 Main Street, Delhi, New York, concerning proposed Local Law Intro. No. 15 of 2022 entitled False Alarm Reduction Act.

All persons interested in speaking concerning the proposed Local Law may attend the hearing in person. To ensure that your comments are heard, they will also be accepted by email until 5:00 p.m. on Monday, August 22, 2022 to: christa.schafer@co.delaware.ny.us.

Dated: August 10, 2022

Christa M. Schafer
Clerk of the Board
Delaware County Board of Supervisors

Chairman Molé asked that anyone wishing to speak to please approach the podium and state their full name and town they reside in.

Nelson Delameter, Chief of the Margaretville Fire Department in the Town of Middletown stated since January 1, 2020 to date they have run about 52 activated alarms that were unfounded with no reason for the alarm. Fifty-two in a year and a half may not sound like a lot but these were going back to multiple residences, being called out at 2:00 or 3:00 a.m. to find nothing, going to a residence that you cannot see into to know if anything is going on inside and not knowing if it’s okay to leave or if they may be called back a few hours later with a fire out of control. He stated it is quite a responsibility on the few local volunteers they have.

Compared to the 52 nuisance alarms his department responded to, he believes law enforcement may have responded close to 5,200 false alarms in the same timeframe. Those guys

are getting run ragged on these intrusion alarms for no reason at all. It is a lot of time wasted and a lot of money wasted responding to these. Something needs to happen.

He stated this is not a new concept. Many years ago, he stood before this same Board and a law was adopted back then. Obviously, that law at that particular time and the way it was written may not have been appropriate for this time, but unfortunately, in each year up until now, somebody dropped the ball and the law was never updated, so here we are again.

He perceives this law as residential only and he believes it should be expanded to specifically state commercial installations as well. His department answers a number of calls at the hospital, school, and nursing home for all the same reasons. This does not count burnt food or steam from the shower, because the alarm system is doing what it is supposed to do, but he believes language should be included to identify commercial buildings as well.

He mentioned that the law indicates fines, if there are any, and he does not expect there would be many, but once this takes effect, he would like to see the income from fines be used in emergency services. He would like to see the money from faulty fire alarms be put into a dedicated fund in emergency services for recruitment and for retention of volunteers in Delaware County.

He stated that he can see this law is heavily dependent upon management from Emergency Services to make this work and in closing, he wanted to say that if it is not managed any better than the last five years of programs in Emergency Services, it probably won't be worth the paper it is written on.

He thanked the Board.

John Hubbell, Mayor of the Village of Margaretville stated they wholeheartedly support the false alarm law. The exception is that it has to be maintained and operated properly as far as following through on what is written in the law. He noted a letter was sent to the County (included at end of hearing).

Kevin Brown from the Town of Bovina who is the Fire Chief in Bovina and also an owner and operator of a local alarm company stated one of his big concerns is that on the alarm side, they were not contacted at all in the process of bringing this law forward. There are many procedures and policies that are in effect out in the field to try to reduce false alarms. He noted alarm companies hate false alarms as much as everybody else does. He agrees that something needs to be done but he believes this law needs to incorporate some of what is out there in the industry that is already being done such as enhanced call verifications or text message verifications. Even if some of these verifications are mentioned in the law so when you get a letter that you have x number of false alarms you can get information such as here are some things you can do to reduce this. Not all companies use those verification techniques. Out of all the alarms his company generates, he believes less than five percent actually make it to the 911 center because they are called off prior to that point so he knows those procedures are effective.

On the fire department side, as Mr. Delameter mentioned regarding how they can get access to a location when they arrive for an alarm, it would be nice to push people toward a Knoxbox system. It's a master key that fire departments or police departments can have. The homeowner or business owner puts a steel lockbox on their building and gives them access to the set of keys for that building so emergency services do not have to break a door down to make entry.

He asked for clarification in Section 6(B) which indicates that as an alarm company owner, he must apply for a permit at the time of install, but in the very next sentence, the law says he cannot commence any services or sign a contract with a customer unless that permit is in place. He asked for a timeframe from applying for a permit that he can relay back to the customer such as if it will take one day, a week, or a month. They need to have a timeline for installation purposes.

He questioned how this law will affect some of the larger institutions we have, SUNY Delhi for instance. Is the state going to be beholden to this? He understands that the college is one of the biggest culprits in this area. The alarm system is not at fault for some of the calls such as a student burning their hair with a hair dryer or from steam coming out of the shower. That system is doing what it should be doing so how do you make them abide by this?

Since no one else wished to speak, Chairman Molé declared the hearing adjourned at 1:12 p.m.

Written comments received are listed below as part of this official record.

Margaretville Village Board by mail dated August 10, 2022.

The Village Board of the Village of Margaretville whole heartedly supports Delaware County's proposal for Local Law No. 15 of 2022, which is titled False Alarm Reduction Act.

In this day and age when our local volunteer emergency services are taxed far beyond what should be considered volunteer and numbers of those volunteers are dwindling even further, this is a law that can only help cut down on the number of times the volunteers are drawn away from their jobs, families, and lives in general to serve the community.

It is felt that this law could help only if Delaware County Emergency Services is able and willing to follow through on what will be required of them with the law. Without follow-through, it is just another frivolous law on the books. Respectfully submitted,